



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

For immediate release
April 5, 2007

Contact: Carla Harris
(804) 726-7107

Protecting the innocent is James City County woman's mission

Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect presents awards to outstanding advocates

Richmond, VA — The Commonwealth recognizes April as Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month, but for **Mary Ann Lee of James City County**, protecting children is a year-round mission. The Governor's Advisory Board (GAB) on Child Abuse and Neglect Awards recognize Virginians who have exhibited a strong commitment to advocacy, protection, prevention, treatment and assistance.

"It is an honor and a privilege to recognize the men and women who champion the safety and security of our children," said Governor Timothy Kaine. "Their focus on prevention is especially critical."

Awards were presented at this year's Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month Conference in Richmond on April 2. Lee was honored with the Dr. Anthony Shaw Award for Exceptional Child Protective Services.

The Shaw Award, named after GAB's first chairperson, was established in 1992 and recognizes distinguished child protective services professionals for outstanding contributions to the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Since 1982, Lee has improved the lives of children and families through her work with the James City County Department of Social Services. Lee was instrumental in implementing an award-winning respite day care program for children whose family situations put them at risk for abuse and/or neglect. She is a social work supervisor who also serves on the regional child fatality team and several state child protective services policy and training committees.

The Governor's Advisory Board also presented Certificate of Appreciation Awards to six outstanding child advocates, four of whom are from other parts of the Hampton Roads metro area:

- a Hampton agency solely dedicated to providing programs that prevent abuse and neglect and strengthen families
- a Chesapeake attorney who makes himself available 24 hours a day to represent the abused;
- a Norfolk pediatrician who works to raise the standards for other physicians;

- an 80-year-old Virginia Beach woman who has been a child advocate for more than four decades;
- a Prince William social services chief who creates innovative programs to help stop abuse before it happens;
- and a central Virginia lawyer who has represented more than 500 children

The awards and conference were sponsored by the Virginia Department of Social Services and Prevent Child Abuse Virginia and co-sponsored by the Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, the Family and Children's Trust Fund, the Child Abuse Prevention Committee and the Virginia Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention.

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Home Office is located in Richmond and administers social services programs, consistent with federal and state law and policy of the State Board of Social Services through 120 local departments of social services (LDSS) throughout the state. The VDSS mission is "People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities."

For more information, go to:

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov>

<http://www.preventchildabuseva.org>

<http://www.fact.state.va.us>

<http://www.governor.virginia.gov/CitizenServices/ConstituentServices/Proclamations/2007/ChildAbusePrevMonth.cfm>

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/index.html>

http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/prevention_month.cgi

###

Attached is a photo of Mary Ann Lee. Interviews and additional photos are available upon request. For additional story ideas and for information on how your media outlet can help raise awareness of child abuse, neglect and prevention, please contact Carla Harris, VDSS, (804) 726-7107 or carla.harris@dss.virginia.gov.